Published and Copyright (c) 1999 - 2012
All Rights Reserved

Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
Dana P. Jacobson, Publisher/Managing Editor
Joseph Mirando, Managing Editor
Rob Mahlert, Associate Editor

Atari Online News, Etc. Staff

Dana P. Jacobson -- Editor
Joe Mirando -- "People Are Talking"
Michael Burkley -- "Unabashed Atariophile"
Albert Dayes -- "CC: Classic Chips"
Rob Mahlert -- Web site
Thomas J. Andrews -- "Keeper of the Flame"

With Contributions by:

Fred Horvat

To subscribe to A-ONE, change e-mail addresses, or unsubscribe, log on to our website at: www.atarinews.org and click on "Subscriptions".
OR subscribe to A-ONE by sending a message to: dpj@atarinews.org and your address will be added to the distribution list.
To unsubscribe from A-ONE, send the following: Unsubscribe A-ONE
Please make sure that you include the same address that you used to subscribe from.

To download A-ONE, set your browser bookmarks to one of the following sites:

http://people.delphiforums.com/dpj/a-one.htm
Now available:
http://www.atarinews.org

Visit the Atari Advantage Forum on Delphi!
http://forums.delphiforums.com/atari/

=~=~=~=

A-ONE #1402 01/13/12

~ Fake Names, Better Talk ~ People Are Talking! ~ No PS4 Announced!
~ Dutch: Block Pirate Bay ~ Facebook Suer Is Fined ~ Atomic-Level HD!
~ Rogue Attorney General ~ Homeland Security Spy! ~ iPad3 in Production?

~ Indian ’Backdoor’ Plan ~ Connected Future Clear ~ Game Sales Drop!

-* SOPA Author: I Won’t Buckle! *-
-* Internet Name Revolution Hits Doubts *-
-* India Government Case Against Web Giants! *-

=~=~=~=

->From the Editor’s Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Happy Friday the 13th!! Well, if you believe in that kind of stuff, you may be cowering in a closet somewhere hoping that a black cat won’t walk by. Or, the proverbial walking around a ladder to avoid walking under it. Or, if you’re like me, it’s just another date that allows you to have some fun!

Speaking of bad luck and the like, the GOP primaries are in full swing! I’m still undecided on a candidate, but I’m hoping that he’ll be a strong candidate against our current leader. It’s still awhile to go before the Massachusetts primary, so we’ll see how things progree until then!

Still no snow on the ground here in my area, but we did get a coating of the white stuff a couple of days ago! Yes, it continues to be extremely cold, but I still feel that’s better than typical New England snow! It is definitely not a typical New England winter - almost a record-setting season. Hoorah!

Until next time...

=~=~=~=

->In This Week’s Gaming Section - No PlayStation 4 Announcement at E3!
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""" US Video Game Sales Drop 21% in December!

=~=~=~=

->A-ONE’s Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

No PlayStation 4 Announcement at E3 2012, Say Execs

With rumors flying about the Nintendo Wii U and the next Xbox, Sony executives rule out a PlayStation 4 unveiling at June’s Electronic Entertainment Expo.

"We are not making any [PS4] announcements at E3," confirmed Sony Computer Entertainment chairman Hirai, speaking as part of a press panel at CES 2012, the Wall Street Journal reports.

"I’ve always said [there will be] a 10-year lifecycle for PS3, and there is no reason to go away from that."

His comments follow previous statements from SCE president Andrew House, who told CVG that his company wouldn’t be "talking about anything to do with future console iterations at this point," quite understandable given the PlayStation Vita’s imminent debut in North America and Europe.

The PlayStation 3, having come to market in 2006, may well be on course for a decade-long lifecycle, but that didn’t prevent it from launching six years into the PlayStation 2’s own 10 year plan.

There’s a corporate precedent for early announcements too, as the PlayStation 2 was revealed at just the right time to divert interest away from Sega’s Dreamcast.

Some clues to the PS4’s direction come by way of recent quotes attributed to Masaaki Tsuruta, SCE’s CTO, indicating that his division is working towards a machine capable of supporting Ultra High Definition TV with screen refresh rates of 300 frames per second.

So while Sony is avoiding a head-to-head with Nintendo at E3, it’s far too soon to call off a 2012 unveiling altogether.

US Video Game Sales Drop 21 Percent in December

U.S. retail sales of video game hardware, software and accessories fell 21 percent in December from a year ago to $3.99 billion as players bought fewer games for their aging consoles, according to market researcher NPD Group.

The results are "not entirely surprising given that we are at the back end of the current console lifecycle," said NPD Group analyst Anita Frazier.

However, the tally was clearly a disappointment. Frazier said the month’s poor performance was unexpected given the quality of new games including "Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3," which was the top-seller, and "Just Dance 3," which placed second.

Consoles are getting long in the tooth. Microsoft Corp.’s Xbox 360 will turn 7 years old this November - even though it replaced the Xbox when Microsoft’s first console was just 4 years old.

Sony Corp.’s PlayStation 3 will turn 6 in November, the same age the PlayStation 2 reached before it got an upgrade. Nintendo Corp.’s Wii is also turning 6, even though its GameCube reached only age 5 before being pushed aside.

Sony and Microsoft have not unveiled plans for a next-generation console, while Nintendo is expected to release its Wii U with a new touch-screen controller later this year.

Not only are consoles getting older, but the way games are delivered is undergoing change. Consumers are now expecting more content to be delivered over the Internet.

Sales of software - the video games themselves - fell 14 percent from a year ago to $2.04 billion.

That’s a bigger decline than the 5 percent drop expected by analyst Doug Creutz of research firm Cowen & Co. Creutz had expected a decline due largely to slower sales of Wii games and handheld games, which are normally big during the holidays.

Hardware sales fell 28 percent to $1.32 billion and accessories fell 27 percent to $629 million.

For the year, overall sales fell 8 percent to $17.02 billion. Hardware sales fell 11 percent to $5.58 billion, software sales fell 6 percent to $8.83 billion and accessories sales fell 11 percent to $2.61 billion.

=~=~=~=

A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Author of U.S. Online Piracy Bill Vows Not To Buckle

The lawmaker behind a bill to combat online piracy vowed on Thursday to press ahead in the face of fierce criticism from Internet giants such as Google and Facebook.

"It is amazing to me that the opponents apparently don’t want to protect American consumers and businesses," Republican Representative Lamar Smith told Reuters in a telephone interview.

"Are they somehow benefitting by directing customers to these foreign websites? Do they profit from selling advertising to these foreign websites? And if they do, they need to be stopped. And I don’t mind taking that on."

The Stop Online Piracy Act, which is before the House of Representatives Judiciary Committee chaired by Smith, aims to fight online piracy of pharmaceuticals, music and other consumer products by allowing the Department of Justice to seek federal court injunctions against foreign-based websites.

Smith said Internet counterfeiters cost American consumers, businesses, inventors and workers some $100 billion a year, though critics accuse him of exaggerating.

Under the bill, if a judge agrees that websites offer material that violates U.S. copyright laws, Internet service providers could be required to block access to foreign sites and U.S. online ad networks could be required to stop ads and search engines barred from directly linking to them.

Heavyweights such as Google, Twitter, Facebook, and Reddit oppose the bill, which came under fire at this week’s Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

Reddit chief executive Alexis Ohanian has said it would "cripple the Internet" and pledged to take his social media site dark for one day next week to protest the bill.

"This (SOPA) could potentially obliterate the entire tech industry - a job-creating industry," Ohanian wrote on his blog.

Smith stressed the bill would only affect websites based outside the United States and criticized opponents for failing to cite specific sections, saying many have failed to read it and were disguising their economic interests with rhetoric about Internet freedom.

Google executive chairman Eric Schmidt told the Economic Club of Washington last month that the bill would "effectively break the Internet" and he compared Smith’s efforts to the same type of censorship that Google has experienced in China.

"There are some companies like Google that make money by directing consumers to these illegal websites," Smith said. "So I don’t think they have any real credibility to complain even though they are the primary opponent."

Smith has received numerous awards from conservative organizations for his opposition to efforts to expand the federal government’s power.

But the Texas representative says giving Washington sweeping powers over the Internet is necessary to protect free enterprise.

Smith predicted the bill would pass the House. It was about halfway through the process of committee hearings and could go to the House floor in a matter a weeks, he said. The Senate was considering a similar measure.

Rogue Attorney General Spreads MPAA-Fed SOPA Propaganda

Last weekend Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff wrote a column in the Salt Lake City Tribune supporting the pending SOPA and PIPA anti-piracy bills. In his article Shurtleff argues that the bills are a necessity if the US is to "stop Internet thieves and profiteers." An interesting take, but not very credible, as the Attorney Generally who may soon have the power to seize domains, simply passed off MPAA-penned propaganda as his own words.

mpaaIt is no secret that the MPAA and other pro-copyright groups lobby politicians and law enforcers, but when a column by a prominent Attorney General appears to be written directly by the entertainment industries something is horribly wrong.

A few days ago Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff wrote an article in the Salt Lake City Tribune. In the column the Attorney General stresses how important it is for Congress to pass the SOPA and PIPA bills. The MPAA is delighted with the support and praised it in a blog post yesterday.

"Shurtleff effectively hammers the point that Google, Yahoo and others have spent millions trying to distort - that states which allow rogue websites to operate unfettered will experience massive revenue reduction and job loss," the MPAA writes.

The Attorney General s statements do indeed bolster what the MPAA and other pro-copyright groups have said all along. By itself this is not unusual, but when we examined the article in more detail we began to notice that many of the sentences that are passed off as Shurtleff s work actually look very familiar.

Could it be that the column was partly written by the MPAA?

We say yes. To back up this claim we will highlight a few sentences from the Attorney General s article, and compare them with those previously delivered by the MPAA and affiliated pro-copyright groups.

The first sentence that caught our attention is: "It will take a strong, sustained effort to stop Internet thieves and profiteers."

Strong words, but also familiar ones. In fact, former MPAA President Bob Pisano uttered exactly the same words in 2010 when he congratulated the Senate Judiciary Committee with unanimously approving the COICA bill, the predecessor to SOPA and PIPA.

But that s just the tip of the iceberg really. Here s another example.

"Congress can make a significant contribution to that effort with legislation to strengthen law enforcement tools. In the interests of American citizens and businesses, it is time for Congress to enact rogue sites legislation."

The sentence above is copied from a pro-COICA column (bottom paragraph) written by Mike McCurry, co-chairman of the pro-copyright outfit Arts+Labs. At the time, McCurry s piece was praised by pro-copyright lobby groups and in his writing McCurry also uses the previously mentioned sentence from the MPAA s former president.

But there s more. The column from McCurry, which is often quoted by the MPAA and affiliated groups such as FightOnlineTheft, displays more similarities with the article published by Attorney General Mark Shurtleff.

For example: "[Rogue sites legislation] cut off foreign pirates and counterfeiters from the U.S. market and deprives them of what they want most - our money. By disrupting the business models of these online criminals, this legislation would make it less profitable and more difficult for those who wish to engage in blatant intellectual property theft."

Now compare that to this quote from McCurry s MPAA-inspired column which is nearly identical, far beyond what can be called a coincidence.

The Attorney General was also directly inspired by the Coalition Against

Counterfeiting and Piracy, a Chamber of Commerce outfit that belongs to the same pro-copyright clique.

Compare: "[rogue sites] represent the worst of the worst infringers on the Internet, are a threat to our economic security and they have no place in a legitimate online market."

..to this quote (PDF) "[rogue sites] represent the worst of the worst on the Internet, and have no place in a legitimate online market." And the list goes on.

Although we can t say with certainty that Attorney General Mark Shurtleff was fed by the MPAA directly, it is obvious that the article wasn t written by him. It s a collection of ripped off sentences that can be directly traced back to the MPAA and affiliated groups.

This is quite a concern coming from someone who is supposed to be objective, especially considering that this Attorney General will have the exclusive power to grant requests for domain seizures and DNS blockades if SOPA or PIPA passes. The way we see it now, this Attorney General is clearly in the pockets of the pro-copyright lobby.

Holmes Wilson of the citizen rights group Fight for The Future agrees with this assessment.

"This is a reminder that SOPA/PIPA - the language, the money behind it, and the arguments used to justify it" are coming straight from the same place: the copyright industry," he told TorrentFreak. "It s possible that they re turning up the heat in Utah in response to the meetings Utah residents have scheduled with Utah Senator Mike Lee."

Unfortunately this isn t an isolated incident. A lot of seemingly independent groups that recently supported PIPA and SOPA use the exact same language that appears to be fed to them by a single source.

Just Google the sentence "Criminals have turned to the Internet, abusing its virtually unlimited distribution opportunities," and you ll see that it was used in pro- SOPA/PIPA letters by the National Governors Association, Public Safety and First Responder Groups and others. Letters that were coincidentally all highlighted on the MPAA blog.

The more we dig, the more we find.

Indian Government Memo: Apple, Nokia, RIM Supply Backdoors

IconWell, well, well, what have we here? Hackers have gained access to internal documents from the Indian Military (shared on the web), and in it, it is revealed that RIM, Nokia, and Apple have added backdoors to their mobile software (BlackBerry, S40 (supposedly), and iOS) which the Indian Military’s intelligence service then used to spy on the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission (the USCC). The backdoors were added by RIM, Nokia, and Apple in exchange for Indian market presence.

The documents in question were uncovered by the same Indian hacking group who managed to leak Symantec source code, and it’s all pretty damning. Further adding to the damning nature is the fact that the document contains portions of emails sent by USCC employees, demonstrating that the backdoors

do actually work.

This shouldn’t come as a surprise. About 18 months ago, the Indian government threatened to ban the BlackBerry because RIM wouldn’t provide the government with access to its services. What might be a surprise to some, however, is that Apple and Nokia are apparently also providing a backdoor into their mobile operating systems.

Of course, it’s not really a surprise. It’s easy to deduce that if the Indian government forces the backdoor upon RIM as a condition to sell BlackBerries in the country, it would impose the same conditions upon others - such as Apple and Nokia. Since we’re looking at closed source software here, there’s really no way to properly check for the backdoors, other than through reverse engineering.

Android isn’t mentioned, but the document does state "RIM, Nokia, Apple etc.", indicating others are involved as well. When it comes to Android, the backdoor wouldn’t be in the open source AOSP, but the Indian government could, say, demand HTC, Samsung, and so on to install a bit of spyware onto their Android devices which provides the same backdoor. It could also be hiding in the closed Google applications (say, the Market), or even in the baseband processor.

All this, of course, vindicates what I wrote only a few days ago: open source is important, as it allows developers to check for backdoors in the software we’re all using - and do something about it. Even if you could find the backdoor in iOS through, say, network monitoring, you still wouldn’t be able to do much about it.

We’re talking India now, but it wouldn’t surprise me in the slightest if European governments and the US are employing similar backdoors. While we often condemn the US government for trampling all over civil rights and liberties, Europe is far more trigger happy with, say, wiretapping than the US is.

It just goes to show: blind trust in a company is stupid. Plain stupid.

India Government Backs Case Against Internet Giants

The Indian government on Friday threw its weight behind a case against internet giants including Google and Facebook, who are embroiled in a battle over offensive content after a judge warned websites may be blocked "like in China."

The case, which has stoked worries about freedom of speech in the world’s largest democracy, was brought by a private petitioner seeking to remove images considered offensive to Hindus, Muslims and Christians from websites.

The government on Friday officially sanctioned prosecuting 21 companies including Google and Facebook.

"The government of India...finds it appropriate to grant sanction...to proceed against the accused persons in the aforesaid complaint in national harmony, integration and national interest," a court document seen by Reuters said.

The next hearing was set for March and senior executives could be summoned, local media said.

Separately, the Delhi High Court is due to resume a hearing on Monday of an appeal against the case, which was originally brought in a lower court.

"The lower court gave a ruling asking the companies to take down some content, we appealed that ruling and it is in the higher court," said a Google spokesman in India on Friday.

The India units of Facebook, Yahoo! Inc and Microsoft Corp declined to comment.

"If a contraband is found in your house, it (is) your liability to take action against it," High Court Justice Suresh Kait told lawyers from Facebook India and Google India on Thursday, according to the Economic Times newspaper.

"Like China, we can block all such websites (that don't comply). But let us not go to that situation."

A law passed last year in India makes companies responsible for user content posted on their websites, requiring them to take it down within 36 hours in case of a complaint. The lower court affirmed the law last week.

Less than 10 percent of India's 1.2 billion people have Internet access, though the connected population is rapidly growing through social media tools on mobile phones, bringing many into contact for the first time with images intended to offend.

More than 880 million people have mobile phones in India, but more expensive Internet-capable 3G models are out of reach for many.

Civil rights groups opposed the laws, but politicians say that posting offensive images in the socially conservative country with a history of violence between religious groups presents a danger to the public as Internet use grows.

In December, Telecoms Minister Kapil Sibal weighed into the debate, urging Facebook, Twitter, Google and others to remove offensive material.

Despite rules to remove offensive content, India's Internet access is still largely free when compared with the tight controls in fellow Asian economic powerhouse China.

Homeland Security Is Monitoring The Drudge Report, The New York Times

It's unclear exactly why, but the Department of Homeland Security has been operating a "Social Networking/Media Capability" program to monitor the top blogs, forums and social networks for at least the past 18 months. Based on a privacy compliance review from last November recently obtained by Reuters, the purpose of the project is to "collect information used in providing situational awareness and establishing a common operating picture." Whatever that means. Either way, the list of sites reported by Reuters reveals in a Wednesday afternoon exclusive is pretty intriguing:

Social Networks

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Myspace

Blogs

- The Drudge Report
- The Huffington Post
- The New York Times’s Lede blog
- Wired’s Threat Level
- Wired’s Danger Room
- ABC News’ investigative blog The Blotter
- "blogs that cover bird flu - news and activity along U.S. borders - drug trafficking and cybercrime"

Multimedia

- Hulu
- YouTube
- Flickr

In conclusion, the Department of Homeland Security is just like you. We’ve seen no reports of The Atlantic Wire being on the list. But if we are, hello Department of Homeland Security employees - thanks for reading!

Dutch Court Orders Block on Pirate Bay Website

Two Dutch cable companies were ordered by a court on Wednesday to block access to the website The Pirate Bay to prevent the illegal downloading of free music, films and games in case brought on behalf of the entertainment industry.

In Sweden, where the website was founded, Pirate Bay’s owners have been prosecuted and the website has been banned, but the popular site is still available online around the world.

The website, run by an unknown group, has become a popular site where users can share music and films and it has become the subject of repeated attempts by the entertainment industry to shut it down.

In 2010, a Swedish appeals court backed a ruling fining and jailing three men then behind the site in a case brought by firms including Sony Universal Music and EMI.

The website’s users were violating copyright laws, the court in The Hague said on Wednesday, ruling on a case brought by Dutch anti-piracy group BREIN, which represents major entertainment companies.

Cable company Ziggo, which is owned by private equity firm Cinven and U.S. fund Warburg Pincus, and a second cable provider, KPN-owned XS4ALL, must block access to The Pirate Bay or risk a fine of up to 250,000 euros ($320,000), the court said.

Last year, another Dutch court ruled that The Pirate Bay must block users

in the Netherlands in another case brought by BREIN, but this order was ignored, the court said. ($1 = 0.7826 euros)

Path to Connected Future Clear at Crowded Tech Show

From the world's first eye-controlled laptop and a pet-tracking app to a glass-encased ultra-thin notebook, 2012's Consumer Electronics Show produced more than a few gems to point the way forward in technology.

Out of the noise and confusion of the sprawling electronic circus in Las Vegas, two trends stood clear: we will soon interact with devices without thinking about it - or even being aware of it - and everything we do will be connected to the rest of the world.

From Wifi-enabled vacuum cleaners telling you when to change the filter, to Facebook apps in a Mercedes-Benz and Pandora in a refrigerator door, the message from the show was that all electronics will soon be part of a seamless network.

"In 1998 that was very science-fiction," said Joe Ambeaut, a director of product management for phone network Verizon, looking at the Internet vacuum cleaner. "Now that use case feels like it's an inch away. It's not fantasy. It's real."

Ninety percent of the world's population will be connected to the Internet by 2015, said the CEO of mobile telecom company Ericsson, who spoke at the show, and there will be 50 billion connected devices by 2020.

That prospect has changed the nature of the world's biggest tech trade show.

"If you were at CES three or four years ago, it was all about who could build the largest flat-panel TV," said Henry Samueli, co-founder of wireless networking firm Broadcom Corp.

"Today, everybody is talking about how I connect up devices, how do I share my media, my movies, my music. It's all about connecting the consumer electronic devices."

Visiting chairman of the U.S. Federal Communications Commission, Julius Genachowski, put it succinctly. "If you shut off the Internet, virtually nothing on the CES floor would work."

Among the technologies that drummed up the most buzz at the show were the Tobii, on which users play games and scroll around screens by just blinking and glancing; and the "Tagg" app that texts or emails you should your pet wander outside a self-defined area.

Devices from technology mainstays also drew their share of admiring crowds, with Hewlett Packard's all-glass "Spectre" in the vanguard of what Intel hopes will be a new generation of super-slim, fully wired and touchscreen laptops to replace the clunkers of yesteryear.

Samsung's 5.3-inch screen "phablet" - the Galaxy Note phone-cum-tablet - also drew debate about whether there is room for a miniature tablet to compete with the 11-inch Apple iPad.

More advances were heralded at the show. Chipmaker Intel announced it would team up with Nuance to build voice-command capabilities into its new laptops starting this year. Microsoft promised that a commercial application of its Kinect system - which allows you to play Xbox games just by waving your hands and feet - will be available for PCs from next month.

To be sure, mobility and connectivity have been consistent themes at CES since Apple's iPhone kickstarted the mobile consumer Web revolution. TV makers from Samsung to LG have touted so-called Smart TVs - Internet-enabled sets that allow you to surf and stream the Web - for several years in Las Vegas, with limited success.

But with Intel - the cornerstone of PC-based computing, along with Microsoft - jumping feet-first into "ultrabooks," the paradigm of ever-more-portable, instant-on, just-enough-brainpower to run YouTube devices is now emphatically mainstream.

Microsoft made its own move that way at last year's show, when it announced it would develop operating software for ARM chips - the architecture that competes with Intel's old x86 and now the global standard for mobile processing because of its power-efficiency.

Even old-guard PC-maker Dell is planning its own tablet finally.

Despite the new emphasis on the network, or what has become known as the ecosystem - the place in the cloud where songs, movies, magazines and apps are stored and accessed - it is clear people are still entranced by devices themselves. That interest in the physical and visual experience looks like it will help keep CES relevant and popular.

This year's edition was the biggest on record, with 1.86 million square feet of show space and more than 3,100 exhibitors, edging past the record of 2008.

IBM Creates Amazing Atomic-Level Hard Drive

If you think a 1TB flash drive is impressive, IBM is about to do you one better. The computing giant announced yesterday that it was able to store one bit of data on the world's smallest storage drive - one 6 atoms long by 2 atoms wide.

Current hard drives use about a million atoms to store a bit of data. The IBM breakthrough allowed researchers to store that same bit of data on 12 atoms of iron using a scanning tunneling microscope. This breakthrough suggests researchers are fast approaching a theoretical maximum size for hard drives.

Don't expect these types of atomic hard drives to appear on store shelves just yet - devices that use this technology could still be five to 10 years off, researchers say. Part of the issue is that IBM's creation operates reliably only at extremely low temperatures. At a temperature of only 5 Kelvin (-451°F), the atoms used have too much thermal energy to reliably hold data.

This is far from the first bit of research IBM has done into hard drive technology. Last year, the company was building a the world's largest hard drive, a device that clocked in around 120 million GB.

iPad 3 Believed To Be in Production Boasting Higher-Resolution Screen and LTE

According to Bloomberg, Apple s new iPad 3 is already in production and is expected to go on sale in March.

Bloomberg is citing "three people familiar with the product" in its story, and other sources close to Apple s manufacturing partners in Asia "who asked not to be named because the details aren t public."

The iPad 3 will apparently boast a higher resolution display than its predecessor, a fast, quad-core processor and even LTE wireless capabilities which carriers such as Verizon and AT&T are rolling out to many customers in the USA. This faster-than-3G technology is becoming standard for many modern smartphones and tablets, and though Apple is usually fairly slow to latch onto new technology, if an iPad is emerging with 4G LTE, Apple must be confident of its capabilities.

Mass production of the new iPad 3 is apparently beginning soon, with factories in China working 24/7 to produce the much-anticipated Apple tablet. The iPad 3 will be the first new product from Apple since the death of founder Steve Jobs in October, and if Bloomberg s specs pan-out, it s sure to be a game-changer (again) offering a great deal of high performance and high-res graphics right out of the box.

This story is still breaking, so we ll bring you more information when we hear about it. Stay tuned.

New York Man Suing Facebook Fined $5,000 by Court

A man who is suing for part ownership of Facebook has been fined $5,000 for failing to fully comply with a court order to give experts access to his email accounts.

Paul Ceglia also was ordered to pay Facebook’s court costs in trying to obtain the material, which Facebook said would help expose Ceglia’s case as a fraud.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Leslie Foschio said Ceglia had delayed the case by failing to produce his email addresses and passwords dating to 2003 while his lawyers unsuccessfully challenged the August order as an invasion of privacy.

"For whatever reasons, plaintiff, fully advised by his lawyers not to do so, chose to knowingly ignore the unambiguous orders of the court," Foschio wrote late Tuesday.

The fine is "designed to coerce plaintiff’s future compliance with all court orders in this case," he said.

The judge declined to take disciplinary action against the attorneys, who have since withdrawn from the case.

Ceglia’s current lawyer, Dean Boland, said Wednesday that Ceglia would pay

the fine and comply with all future court orders. Facebook has since been given the email account information it sought, he said.

"People need to have respect for court orders, so I don't have a problem with the court being upset if it feels its orders have not been followed," said the Ohio attorney, who began representing Ceglia in October.

Ceglia's lawsuit in U.S. District Court claims that when he hired Zuckerberg to help him develop a street-mapping database in 2003, he gave the then-Harvard University freshman $1,000 in start-up money for his fledgling Facebook idea in exchange for half ownership of the company. Palo Alto, Calif.-based Facebook is now estimated to be worth more than $50 billion.

The court case so far has focused exclusively on the authenticity of a two-page work-for-hire contract that Ceglia says proves his claims, along with a series of follow-up emails he says he and Zuckerberg exchanged.

Facebook's attorneys have said they will soon move to have the case dismissed based on their experts' findings that the documents are fake.

In a separate order Tuesday, Foschio denied a request by Boland to sanction Facebook's lawyers for failing to disclose the existence of five computers used by Zuckerberg at Harvard that he said might contain emails between Zuckerberg and Ceglia. The judge said the attorneys hadn't violated any court order.

A Facebook spokesman didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Microsoft Confirms UEFI Fears, Locks Down ARM Devices

At the beginning of December, we warned the Copyright Office that operating system vendors would use UEFI secure boot anticompetitively, by colluding with hardware partners to exclude alternative operating systems. As Glyn Moody points out, Microsoft has wasted no time in revising its Windows Hardware Certification Requirements to effectively ban most alternative operating systems on ARM-based devices that ship with Windows 8.

The Certification Requirements define a "custom" secure boot mode, in which a physically present user can add signatures for alternative operating systems to the system's signature database, allowing the system to boot those operating systems. But for ARM devices, Custom Mode is prohibited: "On an ARM system, it is forbidden to enable Custom Mode. Only Standard Mode may be enable." [sic] Nor will users have the choice to simply disable secure boot, as they will on non-ARM systems: "Disabling Secure [Boot] MUST NOT be possible on ARM systems." [sic] Between these two requirements, any ARM device that ships with Windows 8 will never run another operating system, unless it is signed with a preloaded key or a security exploit is found that enables users to circumvent secure boot.

While UEFI secure boot is ostensibly about protecting user security, these non-standard restrictions have nothing to do with security. For non-ARM systems, Microsoft requires that Custom Mode be enabled - a perverse demand if Custom Mode is a security threat. But the ARM market is different for Microsoft in three important respects:

Microsoft's hardware partners are different for ARM. ARM is of interest

to Microsoft primarily for one reason: all of the handsets running the Windows Phone operating system are ARM-based. By contrast, Intel rules the PC world. There, Microsoft’s secure boot requirements - which allow users to add signatures in Custom Mode or disable secure boot entirely - track very closely to the recommendations of the UEFI Forum, of which Intel is a founding member.

Microsoft doesn’t need to support legacy Windows versions on ARM. If Microsoft locked unsigned operating systems out of new PCs, it would risk angering its own customers who prefer Windows XP or Windows 7 (or, hypothetically, Vista). With no legacy versions to support on ARM, Microsoft is eager to lock users out.

Microsoft doesn’t control sufficient market share on mobile devices to raise antitrust concerns. While Microsoft doesn’t command quite the monopoly on PCs that it did in 1998, when it was prosecuted for antitrust violations, it still controls around 90% of the PC operating system market - enough to be concerned that banning non-Windows operating systems from Windows 8 PCs will bring regulators knocking. Its tiny stake in the mobile market may not be a business strategy, but for now it may provide a buffer for its anticompetitive behavior there. (However, as ARM-based "ultrabooks" gain market share, this may change.)

The new policy betrays the cynicism of Microsoft’s initial response to concerns over Windows 8’s secure boot requirement. When kernel hacker Matthew Garrett expressed his concern that PCs shipped with Windows 8 might prevent the installation of GNU/Linux and other free operating systems, Microsoft’s Tony Mangefeste replied, "Microsoft s philosophy is to provide customers with the best experience first, and allow them to make decisions themselves." It is clear now that opportunism, not philosophy, is guiding Microsoft’s secure boot policy.

Before this week, this policy might have concerned only Windows Phone customers. But just yesterday, Qualcomm announced plans to produce Windows 8 tablets and ultrabook-style laptops built around its ARM-based Snapdragon processors. Unless Microsoft changes its policy, these may be the first PCs ever produced that can never run anything but Windows, no matter how Qualcomm feels about limiting its customers’ choices. SFLC predicted in our comments to the Copyright Office that misuse of UEFI secure boot would bring such restrictions, already common on smartphones, to PCs. Between Microsoft’s new ARM secure boot policy and Qualcomm’s announcement, this worst-case scenario is beginning to look inevitable.

Internet Name ’Revolution’ Hits Doubts

The body that polices Internet registrations will on Thursday launch a domain name "revolution" in the face of the concerns of global bodies ranging from the United Nations to the US Congress.

The Red Cross and International Olympic Committee have already secured exclusions from the new sector that would allow company, organization and city names to rival .com as Internet addresses.

The head of the Zulus in southern Africa and a wealthy Middle East family have already expressed an interest in being part of what Rod Beckstrom, president of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), has called a "new domain name system revolution".

The new generic top level domains (GTLDs) would allow Internet names such as .Apple or .IMF or .Paris instead of .com or .org.

ICANN says the huge expansion of the Internet, with two billion users around the world, half of them in Asia, requires the new names.

But the International Monetary Fund was among more than 25 global bodies which sent a letter to ICANN last month expressing concern about the possible "misleading registration and use" of their names.

The US Association of National Advertisers and non-profit groups such as the Young Men’s Christian Association, YMCA, criticized the plan at a US Congress hearing last month.

They fear it could cause confusion about their Internet presence and force them to spend huge amounts on "defensive registration" to stop cybersquatters, who buy up names and try to sell them at an inflated price, and fraudsters.

Registration will cost $185,000 with a $25,000 annual fee after that.

Beckstrom acknowledged that providing servers and other technical and administrative backup means that the name could cost millions over the course of a decade.

But he calls the new generics "the most significant opening in the history of the domain name system." The aggregate number of new sites "might very well rival dot.com in 10 years time," Beckstrom said ahead of the launch.

He estimates there are now more than 220 million Internet site names, and more than 90 million of them are .com.

ICANN insists however that safeguards are in place to protect the big names the scheme is aimed at.

Jamie Hedlund, ICANN vice president for government affairs, said that while the names of international organizations are not trademarks, they would get the same protection if they are mentioned in international treaties.

If "someone applies for .unitednations, they will have lost their $185,000 application fee because they don’t have the right to that name," Hedlund told reporters.

The International Olympic Committee and International Red Cross secured an opt-out meaning their names could not be registered after talks with ICANN, he said. Other international bodies had not reacted so quickly, he added.

However Beckstrom said ICANN is "very sensitive" to the concerns raised by the international organizations last month. "We’ll be responding to that letter," he said.

If anyone applied for one of the top-level domains using a known trademark or service mark, the owner could complain to a panel of intellectual property experts, who would decide who had rights to the term.

"If they have no rights to that term, you are in an extremely good position," the ICANN chief added, insisting that "defensive registrations" are not necessary.

While ICANN has not given figures, independent experts have predicted there will be anything between several hundred to 4,000 applications when applications are taken from Thursday until April 12. A list of all the applications will be published in May.

Fake Names Make for Better Internet Comments

According to a new data published by Disqus, Internet commenting is at its best when people hide behind fake names, not when they use their real names or no name at all. Disqus is one of the Web's more popular commenting platform, used at sites like CNN, Mashable, and (oh looky there!) The Atlantic Wire. One of its redeeming virtues is the three separate ways it lets people comment: anonymously, with a pseudonym, or with one's real (i.e. Facebook) name. As seen above, Disqus users with pseudonyms not only make a 61 percent majority of comments, but their comments tend to be of a higher quality to boot. Overall "positive signals" - likes and replies - are at a high of 61 percent for commenters using fake names, compared to 51 percent for those with real names and 34 percent for the anonymous (see blown-up chart to the upper right).
Related: Is Facebook Turning Us Into Lonely Robots? Or Worse?

Now, Disqus has every reason to toot its own pseudonymous horn, especially since it's competing head-to-head with Facebook's own native commenting system, which of course makes you use your Facebook name. But Disqus certainly has a point: the Internet wasn't created so we could express ourselves, real name attached and all, but instead so we could invent a whole new fun Internet person to be. And pseudonyms in commenting system do the good job at untethering us from our fleshspace identifies, but still giving us a sense of a reputation to uphold.

=~=~=~=

Atari Online News, Etc. is a weekly publication covering the entire Atari community. Reprint permission is granted, unless otherwise noted at the beginning of any article, to Atari user groups and not for profit publications only under the following terms: articles must remain unedited and include the issue number and author at the top of each article reprinted. Other reprints granted upon approval of request. Send requests to: dpj@atarinews.org

No issue of Atari Online News, Etc. may be included on any commercial media, nor uploaded or transmitted to any commercial online service or internet site, in whole or in part, by any agent or means, without the expressed consent or permission from the Publisher or Editor of Atari Online News, Etc.

Opinions presented herein are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the staff, or of the publishers. All material herein is believed to be accurate at the time of publishing.